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ABSTRACT

The goal of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse is to uphold the principles of the Library Bill of Rights in all types of libraries by improving communication between librarians, board members, professional associations, and other concerned groups in Oregon about challenges to intellectual freedom, and by increasing awareness as to how threats to intellectual freedom can be overcome. The data collection is limited to formal challenges to any type of library material in any type of Oregon library. A formal challenge is defined as a written "Request for Reconsideration" or "Statement of Concern" submitted by a group or individual to a library. Additional information is obtained from newspaper reports, if available. In a few instances, newspaper articles are the sole source of information about a challenge. This Thirteenth Annual Report on the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse summarizes 32 challenges against library materials that took place between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2000. Twenty-four of the challenged titles were books, 6 were videotapes or DVDs, one was an audiotape, and one was an audiotape/book combination. Public libraries experienced 31 of the challenges and school libraries reported one challenge. Thirteen of the challenged items were designated as children's or young adult materials, and 19 were materials for adults. In 32 of the challenges, library staff committees or a school board decided that the materials should be retained. Three of those items were reclassified, one from children to adult, and to more accurately reflect the content in two cases. For each item listed, a summary of objections and a summary of events are provided. A statistical snapshot of the challenges reported since the inception of the Clearinghouse in May 1987 is then presented, followed by a 5-year overview of Clearinghouse data that analyzes the data in a graphic format. A final section identifies other intellectual freedom issues in Oregon in 1999-2000. (AEF)

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Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse
Thirteenth Annual Report
July 1, 1999 – June 30, 2000

Goal of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

The goal of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse is to uphold the principles of the Library Bill of Rights in all types of libraries, by improving communication between librarians, board members, professional associations, and other concerned groups in Oregon about challenges to intellectual freedom, and by increasing awareness as to how threats to intellectual freedom can be overcome.

Objectives of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

To establish a central clearinghouse to collect and disseminate reports about challenges to intellectual freedom in all types of Oregon libraries.

To provide information about challenged materials to public library directors and library board members, school media center librarians and academic librarians when requests for reconsideration of materials are formally registered.

To provide information to public library directors and library board members, school media center librarians and academic librarians about establishing appropriate policies and procedures before a challenge to intellectual freedom occurs.

To cooperate with other persons and groups concerned with intellectual freedom or related issues.

Scope and Methodology of the Clearinghouse

The data collected is limited to formal challenges to any type of library material in any type of Oregon library. A formal challenge is defined here as a written "Request for Reconsideration" or "Statement of Concern" submitted by a group or individual to a library. The Clearinghouse will report informal (not written) challenges when such challenges are of interest because they have received significant public debate.

The Clearinghouse reports details about challenges as they are recorded on "Reconsideration Report" forms submitted by library or school staff, or occasionally by citizens. Additional information is obtained from newspaper reports, if available. In a few instances, newspaper articles are the sole source of information about a challenge.

The Thirteenth Annual Report summarizes 32 challenges against library materials that took place between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2000. The section, "Other Issues in Intellectual Freedom in Oregon in 1999-00," provides a brief

synopsis of other issues concerning intellectual freedom that affect Oregon libraries. A five-year overview of Clearinghouse data (see section, "The Charts") analyzes the data in a graphic format. "The Big Picture," provides a statistical snapshot of Clearinghouse data since its inception in May 1987.

It is possible to research challenges in Oregon libraries using either the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse Index to Challenges at the Oregon State Library website <http://www.osl.state.or.us/libdev/libdev.html> or the printed Annual Reports produced by the Clearinghouse. The Title Index to Challenges on the website will locate titles and the number of the Annual Report that includes the challenge. The Annual Reports themselves will yield more complete information, including a summary of objections. The website index is the source of the most current information. Beginning with the 9th Annual Report, 1995-96, the reports are posted on the Oregon State Library website http://www.osl.state.or.us/libdev/libdev.html under the heading "Intellectual Freedom." To obtain copies of Annual Reports prior to 1995-96, or in the print version, contact Val Vogt, Oregon State Library, at 503-378-2112, extension 222, or val.t.vogt@state.or.us.

Summary of Challenges Reported in 1999-00

The Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse received information about 32 challenges to library materials between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2000. Twenty four of the challenged titles were books, 6 were videotapes or DVDs, one was an audiotape, and one was an audiotape/book combination. Public libraries experienced 31 of the challenges and school libraries reported one challenge. Thirteen of the challenged items were designated as children's or young adult materials, and 19 were materials for adults. In 32 of the challenges, library staff committees or a school board decided that the challenged materials should be retained. Three of those items were reclassified, one from children to adult, and to more accurately reflect the content in two cases.

Twelve challenges to material in 1999-00 concerned materials that were considered excessively violent or too scary for children. Concerns about material with sexual themes or overly graphic language were expressed in six requests for reconsideration. Three challenges concerned materials about witchcraft and the occult. Concern about homosexual content was expressed in two challenges. The nine challenges reported in the "other" category encompassed concerns which ranged from promoting racial hatred of non-blacks to a negatively biased representation of Brazil to degrading religion, especially Native American beliefs.

The challenges listed below are organized according to library type, public or school, and arranged alphabetically by the title of the challenged material. Under the summary of events, the phrase "Staff review process" refers to adopted procedures by which library staff read or view the materials, collect reviews and other information about the material, and make the decision about the challenged item. This procedure is more common in public libraries. Generally, the library director writes a letter informing the library patron of the decision and

explaining the appeals process, in case the citizen is not satisfied with the decision. The phrase "Committee review process" refers to adopted procedures by which a committee, such as an Instructional Materials Review Committee, makes the decision about the challenged item. This procedure is more common in schools. The school board, superintendent, or site council often make the final decision based on a recommendation from the committee.

Challenges in Public Libraries

Afrolantica Legacies by Derrick Bell. (Adult Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed that the book "encourages racial hatred".
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 10/29/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

The Anarchist Cookbook by William Powell (Adult Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed that book was available to a minor.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 11/5/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Babe: A Pig in the City (Children's Video)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about the potential of frightening children, request video be moved from children's area.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained in children's area 12/17/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place by Alden Carter (Young Adult Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about swearing in book, request that title be removed from reading list for 6th and 7th graders.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained on Sixth-Eight Grade Booklist 10/7/99. Youth librarians will discuss inclusion criteria for booklists. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Black Men/White Men: Afro-American Gay Life and Culture edited by Michael J. Smith. (Adult Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about pornographic nature of book.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 6/28/00. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Daddy's Wedding by Michael Willhoite (Children's Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about the subject matter, a gay wedding, in the children's section on parenting shelf.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 9/7/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Danger in Quicksand Swamp by Bill Wallace (Children's Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about the "very scary and too realistic [nature] of book."

Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 3/23/00. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Dog (Children's Video)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about scariness of video for children.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained 4/11/00. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Don't Call Me Little Bunny by Gregoire Solotareff (Children's Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about the depiction of violence and breaking the law in the book, request removal from children's area or warning.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained in children's area with no changes 9/7/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

The Fallen 1. Pale Door by Miran Kim and David Aaron Clark (Adult Book)
Summary of objections: Three statements of concern received at different times by different people expressed concern about extreme violence and graphic sexuality.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 11/16/99, 3/23/00, 5/18/00. Letters sent in each case. No further appeal filed.

Farewell My Lovely (Adult Video)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about nudity and availability to children.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained 3/1/00. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Free Fall by Joyce Sweeney (Young Adult Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about inappropriate language, request it not be labeled for ages 12 and up but adult.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained with Young Adult designation 10/25/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Gay Love Signs by Michael Jay (Adult Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed that book encourages participation in a gay lifestyle.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 11/2/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

The Guide to Getting It On by Paul Joannides and Daerick Gross (Adult Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about ability of children to view and check out book, request restricted access.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained unrestricted 11/2/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Harlot's Ghost by Norman Mailer (Adult Audiotape/Book)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about "parts of the book take place in a basement where people are urinating on each other."
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 2/15/00. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

In a Dark, Dark Room and Other Scary Stories by Alvin Schwartz (Children's Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed that book is too scary for children's section.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained in children's section 11/23/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

In the Realm of the Senses (Adult DVD)
Summary of objections: Concerned expressed about explicit sex and violence.
Summary of events: Staff review process. DVD retained 3/9/00. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Junie B. Jones and a Little Monkey Business by Barbara Park. (Children's Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about negative content, slang, and offensive statements.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 10/7/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Legal Issues for Older Adults (Adult Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed that book is cataloged in sociology rather than legal materials, request classification change.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book reclassified in legal area 6/28/00. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Nocturne by Ed McBain (Adult Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about violent content.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 10/22/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Radiant Identities by Jock Sturges. (Adult Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed that content is child pornography.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 3/23/00. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

A Separate Reality, The Second Ring of Power, The Fire Within and others by Carlos Castaneda. (Adult Books)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about degrading religions... "particularly Native American rites and beliefs."
Summary of events: Staff review process. Books retained 11/1/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Short Cuts (Adult Video)

Summary of objections: Concern expressed about violence, explicit sex, foul language, and classification as comedy.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Video reclassified as drama and retained in collection 8/5/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

South America: Brazil (Adult Video)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed that video provides distorted and negative view of Brazil.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained 11/5/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Tijuana Bibles by Bob Adelman (Adult Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about sexually graphic, violent, and racist content of book.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 10/29/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

When Plague Strikes by James Cross Gilbin (Children's Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed that title appears on boy's booklist.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained on booklist 4/20/00. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

The William Steig Video Library (Children's Video)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about scary and violent scenes.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Video retained in children's collection 12/8/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Witches Bible by Janet and Stewart Farrar (Adult Book)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about book teaching people how to practice witchcraft.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Book retained 6/1/00. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

World Tales: Live at Bennington College (Children's Audiotape)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed that material is inappropriate for children, request tape be reclassified as adult.
Summary of events: Staff review process. Tape moved from children's to adult collection 9/7/99. Letter sent. No further appeal filed.

Challenges in School Libraries

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban by J.K. Rowling (Children's Books)
Summary of objections: Concern expressed about references to witchcraft, sorcery and divination. Request removal from classrooms and school libraries.

Summary of events: Committee review process. School Board approved Committee recommendation. Books retained in libraries and for supplemental classroom use 2/15/2000. No further appeal filed.

The Big Picture: A Thirteen Year Overview

The following is a statistical snapshot of the challenges reported since the inception of the Clearinghouse in May 1987. The total number of challenges was 449, of which 319 were in public libraries and 130 in school libraries. 275 of these challenges were to materials designated for children or young adults and 174 were for adult materials. Objections to the content of library materials fell into the following categories: scary or violent content, 82 challenges; graphic sexual content or explicit language, 168 challenges; witches or occult themes, 54 challenges; homosexual content, 61 challenges; and other concerns, 84 challenges. Library materials were retained in 388 of the challenges (86%) reclassified 15 times (3%); restricted 19 times (4%); replaced 3 times (1%); and removed 24 times (5%). Assistance with data organization and reviews about materials are provided by Val Vogt and Craig Smith at the Oregon State Library.

In order to ensure sound data, we invite every library in Oregon to report all challenges to intellectual freedom. We have posted information about the Clearinghouse, the information request form, the reconsideration report form and other intellectual freedom resources on the Oregon State Library website at <http://www.osl.state.or.us/libdev/libdev.html>. You may also contact Clearinghouse Coordinator, MaryKay Dahlgreen, at 503-378-2112 ext. 239 or <marykay.dahlgreen@state.or.us>.

The Charts: A Five-Year Overview

The following is an overview of the last five years of challenges to library materials in Oregon, based on the data reported since July 1, 1995.

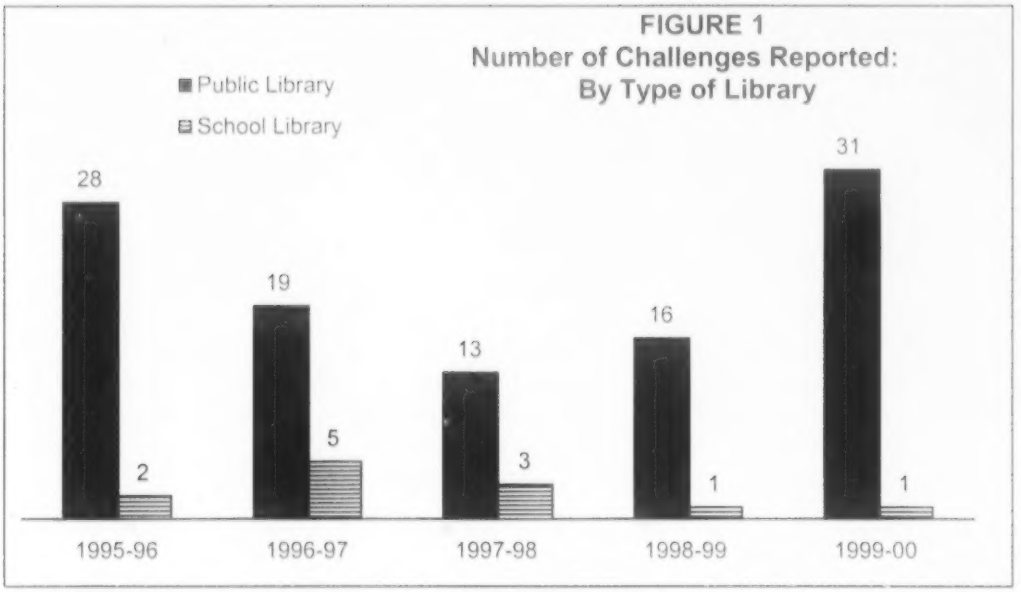

Figure 1 illustrates the number of challenges in public libraries and the number of challenges in school libraries. Over five years, the Clearinghouse collected information about 107 challenges to public library materials, and 12 challenges to school library materials. While the past several years has seen a decrease in reported challenges to library materials, particularly in school libraries, this year has seen a large increase in public libraries. Formulating a reason behind increases and decreases is difficult since reporting is voluntary.

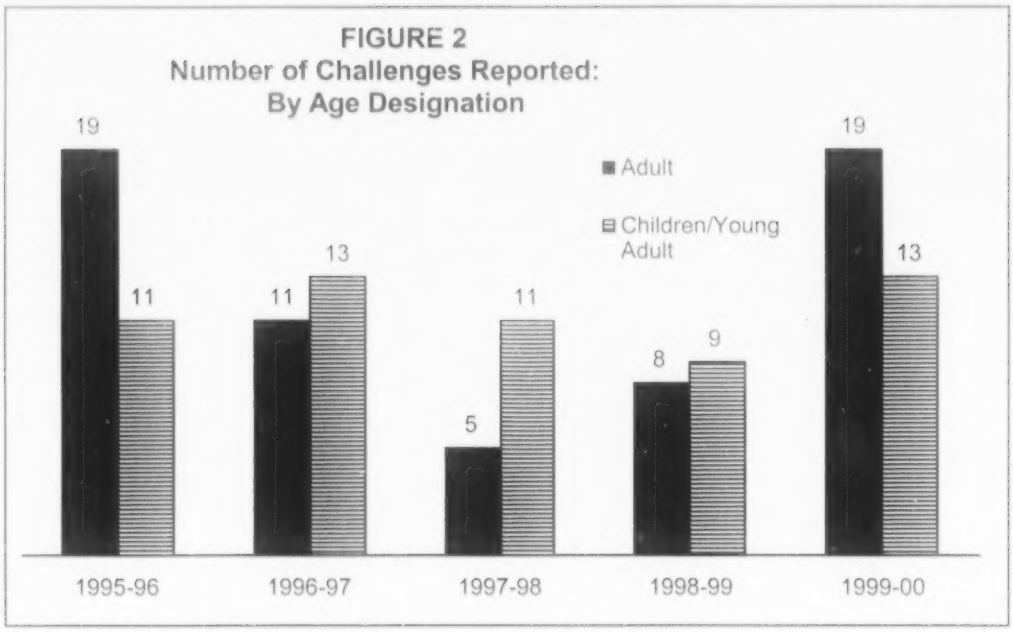

Figure 2 illustrates whether materials challenged each year were for children and young adults or for adults. Traditionally, citizens have challenged materials designated for children and young adults more than materials for adults. However, 1995-96 showed a marked increase in challenges to materials designated for adults, as did 1999-00. The traditional pattern of more youth materials challenges was seen from 1996-97 through 1998-99. Since 1995 there have been 57 challenges concerning materials for children and young adults and 62 concerning materials for adults.

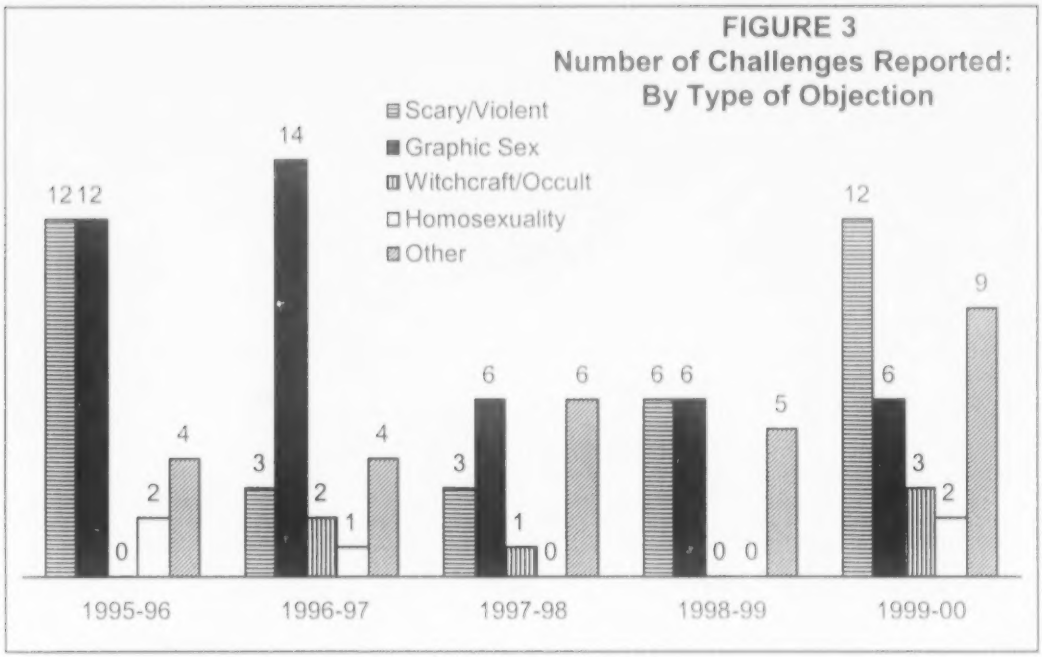

Figure 3 classifies the objections to materials submitted each year into broad categories. Often multiple objections are cited against materials but the chart indicates only one major objection for each challenge. The chart illustrates the varying predominance of either challenges about graphic sexual content and language or challenges about the scary or violent nature of some materials. There are a growing number of challenges (designated "other") that do not fit neatly into the established categories.

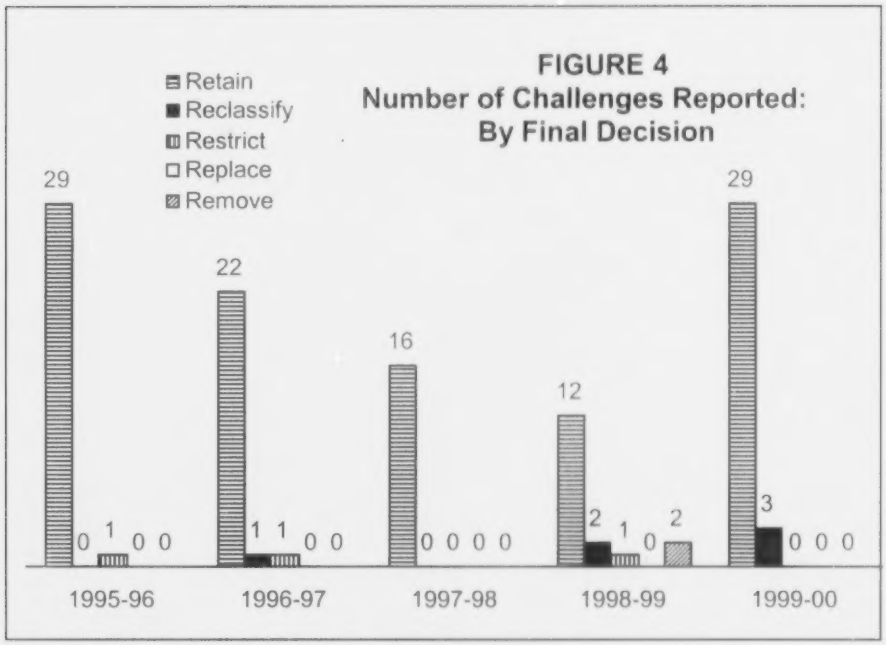

Figure 4 illustrates the final outcome of each challenge: whether the materials were retained without restriction in each library, reclassified to a different age group or subject section in the library, restricted to a certain age group or restricted to access only with parental permission, replaced with a similar item on the same subject or a new edition of the same title, or removed from the library. Over the years most materials have been retained on library shelves with no restriction.

Other Intellectual Freedom Issues in Oregon in 1999-00

While the Internet, and access to the Internet, continues to be the intellectual freedom focus of many communities there were several highly publicized challenges to children's books in school settings. The popular Harry Potter books were formally challenged in the Bend-La Pine School District as noted in the Summary of Challenges Reported. Reading the Harry Potter books aloud in the classrooms of the Dallas School District was challenged. A lively discussion was carried on in the local newspaper. In May the Dallas School Board voted to allow teachers to continue to read Harry Potter in classrooms, following the recommendation of a committee formed to review the challenge. In Springfield, a parent expressed concern about the classroom use of My Brother Sam is Dead by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier because of the Revolutionary War book's "violent imagery and course language." The Springfield School Board voted to retain the book in the fifth grade curriculum at the recommendation of a review committee. This challenge was also covered extensively in the news media.

A variety of Senators and members of Congress have introduced Federal legislation during the year which would require filtering or Internet use policies in school and public libraries that receive federal funding. The library community has been advocating for local control that would allow each library to respond to the needs of their local community in setting Internet access policy. To build support for that position a phone survey was conducted during the late winter and spring of 2000 by the Oregon Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee. The survey was designed as a follow-up to the survey conducted in November 1998 and coincides with a nationwide survey done by the American Library Association. The preliminary results indicate that libraries have "been reaching out to their communities and creating policies based on local needs and concerns and that the Internet continues to receive widespread acceptance and use." Of the 122 libraries in the survey, 115 (94%) provide access to the Internet for their patrons. According to the ALA survey, the national average is 79%. Access is approached in a variety of ways. Twenty five percent (29 libraries) filter access for either children or for all patrons. The national average is 17%. The majority of Oregon's libraries, 72%, place some form of restriction on youth access to the Internet. Those restrictions take the form of parental signature for Internet use or requiring parents be present during children's Internet sessions. Libraries are also offering tools that allow patrons to make their own decisions about the Internet by offering training sessions, printed brochures, or online tutorials. The survey results are available on the Oregon Library Association website <http:// olaweb.org> on the Intellectual Freedom Committee page.

The Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse would like to track all intellectual freedom challenges in libraries, including those relating to the Internet. We are encouraging libraries to communicate with us about concerns and challenges that you receive. Contact MaryKay Dahlgreen, Clearinghouse Coordinator, <marykay.dahlgreen@state.or.us> or 503-378-2112 ext. 239.

Our thanks to Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association and SIRS for underwriting the cost of printing the 13th Annual Report and to Media Weavers for printing and including the *Annual Report* in the Fall issue of Writers NW.